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ABSTRACT

The need is discussed for the services of trained interpreters and translators in the school setting for oral and written communications between limited-English-speaking (LEP) students with special needs and English-speaking personnel. The purpose of this guide is: (1) to highlight the type of background and experience required of interpreters and translators working with LEP special needs students and their families; and (2) to emphasize the importance of training translators and interpreters as well as those who use their services. Specific attention is focused on the following: the need for interpreters and translators; development of appropriate recruitment guidelines; development of professional skills; using interpreters and translators in educational settings; and using translators in test preparation and the assessment process. (21 references) (JL)

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Using Interpreters and Translators to Meet the Needs of Handicapped Language Minority Students and Their Families

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Introduction

The value and importance of the services of persons who can communicate ideas and intents across languages and cultures has long been recognized. Formally trained interpreters are widely used today by international business. Interpreters for the deaf and hearing impaired have become commonplace. However, the training and use of interpreters and translators for working with limited English proficient (LEP) students and their families are still uncommon. The primary role of interpreters and translators in the school setting is to be a conduit for oral and written communications between LEP students and families and English-speaking personnel.

The need for the services of trained interpreters and translators is apparent, and the importance of training in developing interpretative proficiency is well documented. The purpose of this guide is (1) *to highlight* the type of background and experience required of interpreters and translators working with special needs of LEP students and their families and (2) *to emphasize* the importance of training the interpreters and translators as well as those who use their services.

By interpreter, we mean a person who translates orally; by translator, we mean a person who produces a rendering from one language to another in written form. Many of the skills needed by a translator also are needed by an interpreter; however, there are also some differences in the skills required. The interpreter requires skills in producing a meaningful live performance, while translators produce more precise written products.

The Need for Interpreters and Translators

Although language differences among students in U.S. schools have always presented communication difficulties, the problem has become more widespread with the rapid increase of LEP students during the last decade. What perhaps distinguishes many schools today is the diversity of languages found.

With the enactment of P.L. 94-142 (Amendments of Part B of the Education of the Handicapped Act) in 1975, states and local education agencies have been charged with the responsibility of assessing students in their native language or mode of communication. States are required to give assurances that the native language of students suspected of having handicapping conditions is being used in the assessment process. This requirement can be understood to mean that all LEP students suspected of having handicapping conditions must be tested by bilingual school psychologists and speech-language pathologists. Professional bilingual assessment services are not widely available, however. Further, few states have comprehensive training programs for interpreters and translators in the area of bilingual special education, even in the most widely spoken minority languages such as

Spanish and Vietnamese (Salend & Fradd 1985, 1986). While professional bilingual services are the most desirable option for assessing LEP students and communicating with their families, the limited availability of such services often calls for alternative solutions. As the number of LEP students increases, the need for these services also will continue to grow.

Because the need for bilingual communication services in the health service and education fields has not been recognized as being important until recently, little effort has been given to their development (Putsch 1985). Some communities are working to develop interpreter pools and to add bilingual personnel to school staff. Since bilingual services and resources generally are limited in scope, families often are required to bring their own interpreters in order to communicate with professionals, and at times may even use children in this role. When an interpreter from within the family is not available, anyone who speaks the language may be pressed into service. Frequently, interpreters or translators are volunteers who are willing to help, but have little or no training. Using a person who is not trained to deal with typically stressful and difficult situations can have negative outcomes for all engaged in efforts to communicate.

While bilingual assessment for special education services is required by federal law, specific funds have not been allocated for training personnel to collect and analyze the assessment data. The services of personnel working on a voluntary basis usually are not viewed as having a monetary value. Without financial support or value, interpreter and translator services are not viewed as important contributions. In general, because they are voluntary, such services are not regulated, nor are requirements made for their provision. Until programs are funded and available to train and employ personnel as interpreters and translators, volunteer services, even though they are well-intended, will continue to produce limited benefits for the students whom they are intended to serve.

Development of Appropriate Recruitment Guidelines

Conceptualizing Needs and Requirements

Interpretation and translation are acquired skills. Highly skilled translators and interpreters often require several years of specialized training at the university level. In international business, trained translators and interpreters are recognized as professionals with highly valued skills. In educational systems in the U.S., translation and interpretation often are done on an emergency basis by untrained individuals whose only skill is knowledge of another language. If adequate services are to be provided to LEP students and their families,

recruitment and training programs which develop both new positions and the personnel to fill them must be developed.

Interpreters and translators often are needed by a variety of service providers. Holistic conceptualization of the needs of LEP students and their families is important, because many of these needs overlap across governmental and institutional boundaries. Because of the similarities in the ways in which the needs of linguistically diverse groups are met, general training and performance requirements for translators and interpreters can be established. Identifying similarities among service providers allows for the development of entry level and advanced requirements.

Entry level requirements for interpreters and translators fall into three categories: (a) general English language literacy and numeracy, skills which all employees in the mainstream economy must have, as well as an understanding of general U.S. culture; (b) proficiency in a second language and understanding of the culture of the people that speak that language; and (c) a general knowledge and understanding of the institutions in which LEP students and families may need language assistance. This includes an understanding of the rules, expectations, and requirements of these institutions to be served, and an ability to communicate and work effectively with others employed in these institutions. These general skills can be conceptualized by the difficulties posed by their assessment. These skills are illustrated in Figure 1.

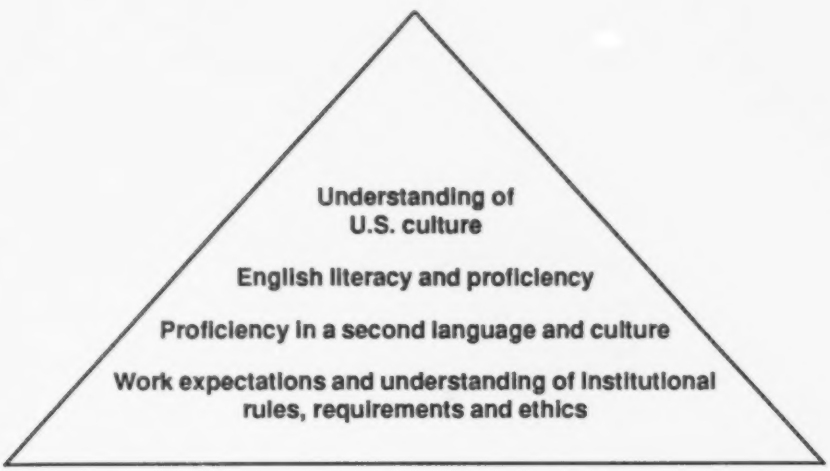

Understanding of U.S. culture
English literacy and proficiency
Proficiency in a second language and culture
Work expectations and understanding of institutional rules, requirements and ethics

Figure 1

Essential skills for interpreters and translators

Assessing General Skills

Basic English language proficiency and computational skills are usually the first skills to be observed, since many prospective interpreters and translators speak English as a second language. The oral English proficiency of a potential interpreter, for example, can be observed through interpersonal interactions. Written English proficiency can be assessed through already established state criteria such as the Tests of General Educational Development (GED) or state tests for high school graduation. English is written and spoken in a variety of styles. It should not be assumed that a high school graduate will necessarily understand technical or legal language. Consequently, the educational attainment of the potential interpreter/translator is also an important variable.

An interpreter/translator serves as a bridge between two cultures. This requires familiarity with U.S. culture on the part of the candidate who is not a native English speaker. There are various ways to demonstrate familiarity with a given culture. One way is to have the potential interpreter/translator explain what might be going on in a scene from an American movie. The scene should be carefully selected and it should depict something that an average American high school graduate would readily understand. Humor is often the most difficult thing to understand in another culture. Consequently, the ability to explain why a scene is supposed to be humorous will quickly reveal the depth of understanding a person might have of the culture.

Knowledge of the target language and culture is necessary. Judging the understanding of the language and culture can be difficult when the observer is not familiar with them. Although native proficiency in another language is not a requirement for candidate interpreters/translators, as a practical step, persons who learned the language as children should be used in preference to candidates who learned the language as adults. As a general rule, a high level of proficiency can be expected in the case of individuals who have spoken it since childhood. However, sometimes an interpreter/translator who learned the language as an adult may be the only bilingual person available. In such cases attention should be paid to the possibility of error in the interpretation/translation process.

The preference for native speakers does not mean that non-native speakers should not be considered as potential interpreters/translators. Non-native speakers often are excellent translators and interpreters.

The ideal interpreter/translator has college-level written and oral proficiency in the non-English language. However, many of the language groups currently represented in the United States have had little access to formal instruction. For some groups, there is no traditionally

written form of the language they speak (for example, the Hmong). Some languages are not used as media in formal education (e.g., the languages of native Americans in the U.S., or some Chinese languages such as Hakka). In other cases, individuals may speak languages that are not used for written purposes in their communities, although such languages may have a highly developed literature in other communities (e.g., Spanish in Southern Colorado, French in Louisiana). One important consequence of the way a given language is traditionally used is that speakers of some of these languages may lack technical and other modern vocabulary items.

Many languages have highly standardized versions that are used in formal situations, especially in writing. Mastery of standard Spanish, French, Arabic, or Chinese, for example, generally requires at least a high school education or equivalent using the standard language as medium of instruction. Proficiency in colloquial forms of a language is especially important in working with LEP students and their families. LEP children may not understand the standard form of their native language (since this requires formal education); many parents of LEP children often have had little formal instruction in their native language so that the standard form of the language is not always totally intelligible. This is very likely to be the case with many Chinese speakers who speak Cantonese at home but who would have learned Mandarin Chinese had they gone to high school in a Chinese medium school.

There is a variety of ways to determine the non-English language proficiency of persons wishing to serve as interpreters. The use of brief tape recorded interactions of both adults and children with different regional accents can assist in determining the potential candidate's proficiency. After listening to the recordings in the non-English language, the person should be able to provide the equivalent message in English. The same recordings can be used to determine whether the candidates can provide written transcriptions of languages with established writing systems. Similar activities can be organized to determine the candidate's ability to move from English to the target language. Here again, it is important to include a variety of regional accents in these activities because interpreters, and possibly translators, will be expected to successfully interact with a variety of non-standard versions of the target language.

Knowledge of a culture is as important as knowledge of the language. Having learned the language as a child and having lived in communities where that language is spoken can be taken as evidence that the potential interpreter/translator is familiar with the culture of that society. However, experience alone may not justify giving the

responsibility for interpretation or translation to an individual. One way to assess understanding of both cultures is to have the candidate interpreter/translator discuss what would be involved in explaining a problem to parents of a LEP student. For example, a Spanish-speaking LEP male youth is involved in a fight at school because an English-speaking student called him stupid. The potential interpreter/translator should point out that in Spanish calling someone "estúpido" is a very serious insult (a fighting word) while calling someone "stupid" in English is usually not to be taken very seriously. In other words, the youth should not react to the English word as if it were the Spanish equivalent.

With respect to the candidate's knowledge of the language and culture, care must be taken to recruit those people who have had recent first-hand working experiences with the target population. People who arrived in the United States many years ago may experience difficulties understanding the language and the customs of the newer arrivals, even though they are from the same country of origin. Differences in socioeconomic levels, urban and rural groups, and other geographic or political origin can also influence the ways in which the interpreters and translators are perceived and understood by their intended audiences. For example, a recently arrived young person from Cuba has grown up in a very different world from that of his/her grandparents. Cubans who arrived in the U.S. thirty years ago may have problems understanding both the cultural and linguistic usage of recently arrived youngsters.

General knowledge of institutional requirements, including an understanding of rules, regulations, and ethics can be assessed after training through multiple-choice tests developed for that specific purpose. However, ability to demonstrate understanding and to put information into practice is not so easily assessed. This information may need to be role-played and observed before interpreters and translators in training are actually permitted to work with students and families. Determining that interpreters have a clear understanding of their responsibilities is essential before they have access to confidential information.

Developing General Professional Skills

Skill development is an important part of the professionalization of interpreters and translators. They should be encouraged to consult dictionaries and to continually upgrade their knowledge of idiomatic expressions, dialects, accents, regionalisms and technical terms in both languages. Seeking out and accepting feedback about their performance in order to improve their effectiveness should be promoted. Second language service providers also should be encouraged to attend

training programs, to participate in discussions and exchanges of information, and to consult with other interpreters, translators and professionals to further develop and enhance their skills. It goes without saying that in order for second language service providers to improve their skills, the resources and opportunities need to be available (Medina 1982). Since interpreters and translators are in the position of manipulating not only the information exchange, but also the actual situation itself, issues of ethics and practice must be made clear to all personnel prior to participation in cross-cultural communication. The following section provides a discussion of specific concepts needed by interpreters and translators and users of interpretation and translation services.

The concept of "professional behavior" implies adhering to certain ethical standards. It should not be assumed that potential interpreters/translators will have a clear understanding of what it means to "act professionally." Ethical standards will have to be explained carefully. The candidates can be trained by means of critical incidents. A vignette describing a situation involving an interpreter/translator is read to the trainees and then discussed in terms of what someone has actually done. The trainees discuss the appropriateness of the action in relation to the ethical standards that have been explained. For example, a vignette could be presented describing an interpreter who learns, while interpreting for the parents, that one of the parents has epilepsy. The interpreter tells other members of the minority language community that the parent has epilepsy. The trainees then discuss whether it was professional behavior for the interpreter to have broken confidentiality. In addition to confidentiality, the concepts of neutrality, punctuality, acceptance of assignments commensurate with capabilities, and the need to obtain informed consent are all important areas of professional understanding which must be addressed in training.

Confidentiality

Interpreters and translators need to be schooled in the importance of confidentiality in educational settings (Esquivel 1985; Medina 1982; Wilen 1989; Wilen & Sweeting 1986). Information obtained about students, families or school personnel is not to be discussed outside the confines of the context in which the information was obtained. For example, the fact that the school psychologist reported to a parent through an interpreter that a student has a specific learning disability should not be discussed by the interpreter in the community or with anyone outside the scope and confines of the meeting in which the communication transpired. It is important to note that interpreters have a duty to disclose to the professional all information obtained from the student and family during a meeting. The client also should be

informed that the information provided will be disclosed to the monolingual professional.

Neutrality and Impartiality

Interpreters should remain neutral and impartial (Freed 1988; Medina 1982). Omissions, alterations or additions to the communication should be avoided in meetings, conferences, and assessment situations (Wilen 1989). The interpreter must make every effort not to state personal opinions or take sides. If specific terms or concepts cannot be communicated meaningfully, the parties involved should be informed so that adjustments can be made and the communication reformulated (Woo & Torres 1988). With respect to assessment, the interpreter must be specifically instructed to avoid verbal and nonverbal prompting, to state questions exactly, and to observe and record the student's verbal and nonverbal behaviors with precision and objectivity (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association 1985; Dade County Public Schools 1982; Wilen & Sweeting 1986).

Punctuality and Responsibility

Punctuality is essential. It is a means of showing respect for the school and the persons wishing to communicate. Personnel who may come from cultures with concepts of time and responsibility which differ from that of the mainstream U.S. culture will experience difficulties being viewed as professionals, unless they develop a strong sense of punctuality. They should be trained in the importance of meeting specified deadlines and in the need to be punctual for conferences, meetings, and staffings (Medina 1982). When the training of interpreters and translators is viewed as a professionalization process which includes monetary compensation for appropriate performance, the concepts of the need for punctuality and responsibility can be more effectively reinforced than when they are serving on a volunteer basis.

Acceptance of Assignments

Those engaged in using interpreters and translators need to be aware of their limitations and to consider alternatives if the interpreter or translator appears to be reluctant to accept an assignment. Interpreters and translators should be encouraged not to accept assignments from school personnel which surpass their capabilities or training (Fradd 1990). Being candid and revealing when they feel unable to adequately complete a task should be accepted. For example, a Vietnamese interpreter may speak both Vietnamese and English fluently, but may not have the reading and written language skills to translate Exceptional Student Education English language documents into

Vietnamese. Or, for instance, since Chinese is not a single language, a Chinese interpreter may do fine in Mandarin, but be unable to interpret Toisanese (Woo & Torres 1988). An interpreter may feel comfortable working in small group settings but not before large groups. Likewise, interpreters should not be expected to assist with administration of tests without previous training or experience; otherwise, results will be jeopardized. Disclosure of personal and professional limitations should be viewed and treated positively. To encourage a person to perform beyond his or her limitations is to encourage poor performance.

Obtaining Informed Consent

When interpreters work with evaluation specialists in formal individual assessment, written consent to use an interpreter should be obtained from a parent or guardian. This permission can be made part of the parent consent for individual evaluation form completed prior to referral. Additionally, written evaluation reports should contain the name of the interpreter, the dates when the interpreter was used, a description of the activities for which the interpreter was used, and a reminder that test results could be affected (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association 1985).

Developing Specific Skills

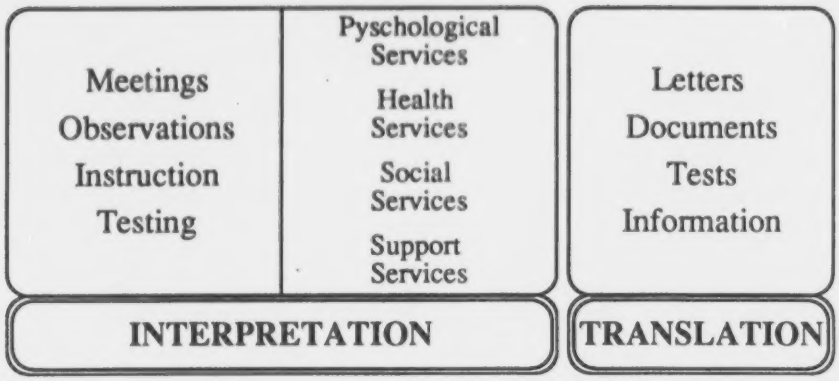
In addition to the general skills which all personnel who work in a bilingual, bicultural capacity must have, there are specific skills which must be developed depending on the tasks and functions which the personnel will perform. These specific skills can be grouped into two categories; however, in many cases skills and functions are overlapping as well as discrete. These categories include: (a) work involving written forms of the language, or translation; (b) work involving oral forms of the language, or interpretation. These skills are depicted in Figure 2 on the following page.

Using Interpreters and Translators

Identification of specific tasks and specialized skills leads toward role definition. Role definition of translators, interpreters and other support positions and the designation of specific responsibilities for entry and advanced level bilingual personnel can provide a career ladder by which language minority personnel can begin to successfully participate and contribute within the mainstream. In order for this to happen, the employees' roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined—not only to translators and interpreters, but also to all other staff members. The amount of time to be devoted to working with families and to other responsibilities must be clearly understood by all involved. The

Figure 2

Specific skills needed by interpreters and translators in school settings



kinds of services to be provided through translation and interpretation must be established.

The primary role of interpreters and translators in the school setting is to be a conduit for oral and written communication between limited English proficient students and families and English-speaking school personnel. Interpreters and translators also can be valuable sources of cultural information. They may provide insight into child-rearing practices and nonverbal communication of the target language and culture. For example, they may indicate that failure to maintain eye contact is not viewed as a sign of disinterest or inattention by all cultures, but can also be a sign of respect for authority (Fradd & Weismantel 1989). They may explain that some students may be hesitant to speak up when they do not understand classwork for fear of embarrassing their teacher or that in some families the custom of saying "yes" may be used to avoid confrontation (Wei 1984).

School personnel have a duty to monitor, guide, direct, and supervise interpreters and translators. Interpreters and translators should not act in isolation, as they are not professional psychologists, educators, speech-language pathologists, or counselors. Activities involving interpretation should be done in the presence of those professionals needing the services. An interpreter, for example, should not be given the responsibility of administering a test, but should work as a team member with the psychologist conducting that assessment.

Interpreter and translator responsibilities in the educational setting require varying levels of skills, ranging from basic to complex. Some interpreters and translators may be suitable for certain tasks and unsuitable for others. Though most interpreters and translators may have the expertise to perform basic communications with students and parents in the school office, only a select few will be proficient enough to

perform complex activities such as psychological assessment.

Viewing the services of interpreters and translators on a developmental continuum can be helpful in preparing personnel for specific roles and responsibilities and for matching requirements with the skills demonstrated by the personnel available. A suggested list of services is provided in Tables 1A and 1B. Tasks are listed in order of difficulty and need for training. Table 1A provides suggested activities using oral communication. Table 1B lists activities requiring written communication skills.

Because the use of interpreters and translators in school settings is a relatively new practice, little research has been conducted on this topic. While recommended professional practices have been suggested, few standards relative to the use of interpreters in testing language minorities have been developed (Figueroa 1989). Even professional documents designed to assist in the assessment process fail to provide information on the topic (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education 1985) while others provide minimal guidelines (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association 1985). It is important that school districts and educational institutions develop their own guidelines, and that all personnel who use interpreters or translators are well informed about these established policies.

Working with Interpreters and Translators in Educational Settings

Educational personnel who work with second language service providers need to develop skills for managing cross-cultural encounters as well. Often the needs of the personnel who use second language services are overlooked in the training process. While the training they require is not as extensive as the preparation of interpreters and translators, the skills of professionals involved in the process of cross-cultural communication are critical. A great deal of time and resources can be wasted unless all the personnel involved in working in cross-cultural settings are trained both in using and providing language services.

The Interpretation Process

There are specific activities that should take place prior to, during, and after the process of interpreting or translating from one language to another. The act of selecting appropriate terminology and providing meaningful communication in two languages is complex. The process of producing correct and meaningful language through interpretation is discussed first. Next, the process of translation is reviewed.

Successful interpretive sessions require that the interpreter have a clear understanding of the intent of the communication and desired

Table 1A

Some activities requiring interpretation services*

* These activities should be initiated by a member of the school faculty or support personnel and carried out under the direct supervision of a person responsible for the success of the activity.

Communication with the Family

- Telephone calls to obtain or provide specific information
- Informal meetings between the family and school personnel to obtain or provide specific information
- Formal meetings between the family and the teacher or members of the multidisciplinary team to explain specific procedures and policies or student difficulties or to obtain family support in modifying student performance
- Formal meetings to explain to the family specific difficulties which the student is having and to obtain permission for assessment and for consideration of special education placement
- Formal meetings with members of the multidisciplinary team to explain evaluation results and recommendations to the family
- Formal meetings to communicate between the family and members of the multidisciplinary team to make change of placement and future evaluation decisions

Communication with Students

- Informal oral communication to convey school policy information and provide orientation information
- Informal assistance with instructional activities
- Informal communication in providing guidance and support information
- Informal assessment activities
- Formal communication in assisting with assessment procedures

Communication with School Staff

- Informal communication about family or student concerns
- Informal communication about cultural or linguistic differences between target students and school expectations or requirements
- Formal in-service training to provide staff with information about the culture and language of target groups of students
- Formal communication at school and community meetings
- Formal communication at hearings and other legal proceedings

- Written communications with the family on behalf of the teacher or school to provide information on school activities, meetings, and specific events such as field trips or immunizations
- Written statements of school policy, requirements, and expectations
- Documents such as permission for assessment, legal agreements, and individual educational plans
- Evaluation results and recommendations
- Minutes of meetings between the family and school and public meetings
- Tests and formal assessment procedures

Table 1B

Activities requiring translation services*

*** These activities should be initiated by a member of the school faculty or support personnel and carried out under the direct supervision of a person responsible for the success of the activity.**

During the process of interpreting a message from one language to another, the interpreter:

- hears or reads the message;
- comprehends the meaning or intent of the message;
- determines how to express the message in both languages (Consideration is given to the sender's and receiver's educational level and sophistication of language skills as well as the intent of the communication.);
- provides appropriate verbal and nonverbal information;
- monitors the recipients' responses to determine the effects of the communication;
- questions and revises the communication if the desired effect is not the intended outcome.

Table 2

The interpretation process

outcomes. In order to assist the interpreter, the professional directing the interpretation needs to understand the steps which the interpreter must go through in order to produce an accurate version of the communication. These steps are listed in Table 2.

In order to ensure effective communication through interpretation, there are a series of activities which need to be carried out while preparing for, carrying out, and following up the interpretation session. These activities are referred to as the briefing, interaction, and debriefing processes.

Briefing

The professional using interpreter services should brief the interpreter before the interpretation sessions so that the purpose, plans and expectations for the session can be communicated, and both parties can prepare to work as a team (Langdon 1983, 1988; Fradd 1990). For example, in an assessment situation, the psychologist needs to explain the protocol of assessment along with issues such as standard administration, rapport-building, confidentiality, impartiality, and avoidance of prompting, commenting on responses or adding or deleting information. Additionally, the psychologist should familiarize the interpreter with the evaluation instruments, explain the role of all participants (i.e., psychologist, interpreter, student), and make sure the interpreter understands the types of recordings to be made (Wilen 1989; Wilen & Sweeting 1986). If possible, the interpreter should be made aware of any unusual circumstances with the child which may surprise or distract him or her, such as reported hyperactivity or self-stimulating behaviors. Best practice indicates that interpreters would go through the process of taking the test in order to comprehend the requirements. If interpreters are not given sufficient training and briefing, they may feel they are failing in their roles as interpreters if a student does not respond correctly during assessment. As a result of participating in the assessment process, interpreters should be able to inform the professional of any cultural and language factors which may impact on the interpretation session. They should be able to discuss information on cultural or linguistic difficulties after the student has left the assessment setting.

Similar briefing requirements are needed for interpreters working with teachers and other school personnel during a meeting with a student's family members. Prior to the meeting, the interpreter meets with the person directing the meeting. An agenda is established and the key points are discussed. The technical terms which will be used are reviewed. Potential difficulties in providing meaning for these terms are considered. Cultural aspects of the meeting are also discussed.

Seating arrangements are established. Points at which the interpreter will summarize the interaction are agreed upon. Copies of the agenda can be made for all persons attending the meeting. If the professional feels comfortable with the arrangement, the interpreter can make appropriate introductions, inform the family of the purpose of the meeting, and provide them with the information contained in the agenda. In order for the professional to remain involved in the meeting, there must be agreed upon times at which the communications are summarized in English. Questions or concerns which the family may raise must be conveyed to the professional. The manner in which communications are to be carried out must be agreed upon prior to the meeting. Different arrangements may be made depending upon the type of meeting held and the participants involved.

Interaction

During the meeting, the agenda can be used as a guide for carrying out the interactions. The professional using the interpreter services should be closely attuned to the verbal and nonverbal interactions of all parties involved and should intervene as necessary. The agenda also serves as a framework for making notes about nonverbal behaviors which the professional may want to discuss with the interpreter after the session. The session should be temporarily halted if the parent or student begins to show signs of possible distress or misunderstanding. For example, through an interpreter, a parent might understand a recommendation for full-time placement for emotionally handicapped students as a residential placement, rather than placement during the school day, and the recommendation may need to be explained again. The parent might be encouraged to visit the instructional setting in order to gain a clearer understanding of what actually occurs there.

Debriefing

After the interpretation session, a debriefing period is recommended, during which behavior and outcomes are discussed along with any questions, problems or concerns about the meaning of the communication. Debriefing involves an exchange of information between the interpreter and professional for purposes of clarifying and understanding what transpired during the interpretation session. For instance, if a Haitian-Creole speaking examinee had difficulty with singular and plural nouns on the English part of an assessment for which the interpreter only translated the directions, the interpreter can inform the evaluation specialist that these differentiations are not made in Haitian-Creole (Savain 1989). The interpreter can also provide information about the level of the student's language skills in his or her native language,

whether the student is from the country or city and whether the student has any seemingly unusual speech patterns or communication difficulties. In addition, the interpreter can also provide further information about cultural influences on behavior, attitudes, values, and performance. For example, the interpreter may explain life on a kibbutz in Israel to a professional working with a Hebrew-speaking family from that background. If a student gives a response that may not have appeared on a test protocol as correct, but which is regionally acceptable, this can be communicated during debriefing as well. Sometimes the communication can become quite animated. From observing nonverbal interactions, the educational professional can gain an understanding of what transpired which is very different from what actually occurred. Explanations of both verbal and nonverbal communication help to assist the educator in understanding cultural differences and in remaining an effective part of the communication process (Garrido 1989). The briefing, interaction, and debriefing activities in which interpreters engage in providing interpretative services for assessment are summarized in Table 3A.

Similar briefing, interaction, and debriefing activities are carried out during meetings with families. These are displayed in Table 3B.

The Translation Process

Like the interpretation process, the translation process should involve the steps of briefing before, and debriefing after the translation. The translator and professional requesting the services should have an open and ongoing communication and the translation process should basically follow the steps outlined for interpretation in Table 2. In the school setting, the use of prepared, rather than sight or instantaneous, translations is recommended whenever possible (Fradd 1990). Prepared translations give the translator time to use a dictionary, to consult with other speakers of the language, to consult with the user of the service, to seek feedback and to revise the translations before formal dissemination. It is recommended that translations be reviewed by more than one native speaker as a check on accuracy (Dade County Public Schools 1982). As a further check, translations can be translated back from the non-English language into English or vice-versa. The activities which are included in the briefing, translation, and debriefing process for translators are included in Table 4.

Because many of the English terms and concepts used by educators, speech-language pathologists, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals cannot be directly and meaningfully translated into other languages, brief descriptions may have to be given in the second language. For example, in many languages, there appear to be no direct

Table 3A

Effective procedures for using interpreters in assessing LEP students

Briefing to Plan Assessment

- Discuss purpose of the session.
- Review specific aspects of the tests to be used including procedures for administering them.
- Discuss format for administration.
- Discuss any concerns which the interpreter may have.

Interaction during Assessment

- Observe student and interpreter interacting.
- Note any difficulties in the test items or events involved.

Debriefing after Assessment

- Discuss specifics of student performance.
- Discuss cultural or linguistic concerns.
- Obtain overall impressions of interpreter's view of student's motivation and participation in the assessment process.

Table 3B

Effective procedures for using interpreters during meetings

Briefing to Plan Meeting

- Review overall agenda of the meeting.
- Discuss key concepts, words, and phrases.
- Establish the essential points to be covered.
- Determine the outcomes to be achieved.

Interaction during Meeting

- Make sure that everyone is kept informed.
- Monitor nonverbal language to be certain that everyone is being understood.
- Follow established plan.
- Note areas of specific difficulty or concern.

Debriefing after Meeting

- Discuss overall outcomes and specific areas of achievement or concern.
- Compare observations in light of cultural insights.
- Plan for follow-up.

Table 4

Using translators in preparing tests and other assessment procedures

Briefing

- What are the critical features of the test?
- Has the translator taken the test?
- What cultural or linguistic features did he or she observe?
- What are the anticipated difficulties?

Translation

- The process of translation (This may take several weeks.)
- Are dictionaries and other materials available?
- Are other native speakers available for support?

Debriefing

- What were the obstacles?
- Has the test been back-translated?
- Have other native speakers reviewed this version?
- Have specific linguistic variations been included to accommodate various dialects within the target language?
- How should the assessment be pilot/field-tested?

or standard translations for many of the English exceptionalities such as "specific learning disabilities" or "educable mentally handicapped" or for many terms common to the school setting such as "monitor, written excuse, report card," etc. Once specific terms and concepts or descriptions of such terms and concepts are translated into a second language, a list of such terms can be prepared for dissemination or publication. In this way the same translation of terms can be consistently used within a particular school system or discipline.

Relative to testing, some translations of English tests are published and others are done on a more informal basis. In both cases, users of these translated tests should recognize their limitations. Some test translations may contain culturally charged content such as the picture of the Statue of Liberty on the Spanish translation of the *Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test* (Diaz, Levine, Patterson, Sweeting, & Wilen 1983). Some concepts that exist in English may not exist or may differ in the other language. For example, the word "parent," as opposed to "mother" or "father," may be misunderstood by many Haitian-Creole speakers (Savain 1989).

Some LEP students in U.S. schools speak a variety of a language that has many borrowings from English and they may have difficulty with monolingual translations. Even within a particular language, there may be several different, but equally correct ways to say the same word depending on one's country of origin. For example, a "kite" could be "cometa" in Spain, and "papalote" in Cuba and Mexico (Wilen & Sweeting 1986). Translation often fails to take multiple acceptable responses into account. Additionally, words may have different levels of difficulty across languages or dialects, and it cannot be assumed that the psychometric properties of the original test and the translation are comparable (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education 1985).

An alternative to using translations of English tests is to develop informal tests in the target language. Translators can be valuable assets in this regard. For example, translators can assist psychologists in developing informal measures of alphabet and number skills, knowledge of body parts, color concepts, and basic reading and written language skills in a target language for which formal tests may be unavailable. Such information is helpful in gaining knowledge about the student's pre-academic and academic skill development in his or her native language and would be important in educational planning.

Translation services are also important in communicating information about the school to students' families. School events, field trips, meetings and other information which keep parents aware of school

happenings can easily be provided through translations. Some schools translate student policy documents and regulations. Others provide parents and students with written explanations of cultural events, such as proms and senior days, in their non-English languages. Translations informing families about students' accomplishments can have an especially powerful influence in promoting family interactions and participation within the school. For example, one principal routinely provides translations of all written communications in the six languages present in his school. He encourages positive messages about student achievement in a variety of different formats (Davis 1989). However, it should be realized that some minority languages are not usually written or read by individuals with limited education. Consequently, a written message sent home to parents may not be understood. An alternate way of communicating with many parents is by means of recorded messages on audiocassette. For example, the Hmong, whose language is not usually written, communicate with each other by means of cassettes.

Understanding Key Concepts and Procedures

Just as interpreters and translators in the field of law and medicine need specialized knowledge of legal and medical terminology, interpreters and translators in the school setting need training in key concepts and procedures related to their role and responsibilities. Though some broad concepts such as briefing and debriefing generalize across roles, others are situation specific. Interpreters and translators in the schools need knowledge of the tools of the trade, forms, procedures, techniques, and tests, utilized by those with whom they work. For example, interpreters working in a school office need training in office procedures such as telephone decorum and registration and withdrawal procedures. Those working with school social workers need training in the protocol of home visitation, adaptive behavior assessment and clinical interviewing. Those interpreting for school psychologists need knowledge of the protocol of psychological assessment, consultation, counseling and conferencing. Those interpreting for exceptional student education staffings need training relative to the exceptionalities, eligibility, placement and planning documents, and procedural safeguards.

All interpreters and translators are not suitable for every assignment within an educational setting. Some roles are more specialized, requiring much more expertise and sensitivity than others. The skills and experience needed to communicate a simple message to a non-English-speaking parent in a school office would be far less complex than those required to interpret for school social workers, school psychologists, or due process hearings.

Service delivery could be greatly enhanced if standard forms and lists of key concepts, terms, and procedures could be pre-translated for the various disciplines and roles and utilized by interpreters and translators on a consistent basis. These translations could be distributed separately or as part of a procedures handbook to facilitate quality service delivery. Additionally, it would be beneficial to develop a cadre of interpreters and translators skilled in working with specific disciplines and for the same interpreters and translators to work with the same professionals on an ongoing basis. In this way, a relationship and team approach can be established.

It is important for those using interpreters and translators to realize that sessions where a second language is used will likely be more lengthy than those where such services are not needed. Extra time should be allotted and those involved should be prepared for the extra time commitment in advance.

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